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Mammoth or Medium Red Clover

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MAMMOTH or MEDIUM

Red Clover

MANY farmers apparently have a misconception about the difference between mammoth and medium red clover.

Each year we get reports of farmers who supposedly have seeded mammoth clover with small grain to be plowed under in the late fall or the following spring for green manure. These farmers chose mammoth clover because sweetclover does not thrive on acid soil. They preferred it to red clover because they believed that mammoth clover will make a greater growth than medium clover in the seeding year. This would make it more valuable than medium red for a green manure crop.

It is almost certain, however, that many of these fields of so-called "mammoth clover" as a matter of fact are medium red clover instead. Let's take a look at the respective characteristics of these two clovers.

Mammoth Clover

True mammoth clover, even under the most favorable seasonal conditions such as we had in 1946, produces no stems, only basal leaves, the seeding year. It hardly ever grows taller than the height of the oat stubble the first season. Mammoth clover tends to produce root development rather than top growth in the seeding year. This root development is somewhat greater than that made by medium red clover.

In the second year, true mammoth clover reaches full bloom about 2 weeks later than medium red clover. It also makes a much more rank growth and is inclined to lodge rather badly. The stems of mammoth red clover are noticeably thicker and coarser than those of medium red clover.

Mammoth clover makes only one full crop in the second year. Such aftermath growth as occurs usually is not sufficient to justify harvest.

Mammoth Clover Shows Little Growth Year Seeded, Makes Only One Crop Second Year

By H. D. HUGHES

Experience has taught us that mammoth clover often will grow on soils where it is difficult to get a stand of red clover. A good example is sandy soil, which is inclined to dry out readily causing clover seedlings to die. This ability to make a successful stand under more difficult conditions has been attributed to the fact that mammoth clover uses its food materials for extending its root growth in the seeding year rather than for making top growth.

Medium Red Clover

Medium red clover, unlike mammoth, generally makes a fairly good top growth the year of seeding. In a favorable season, such as 1946, many seedings will make a substantial growth their first year. They may even head and flower freely before the small grain shocks are out of the field.

By the end of a favorable season it is hard to tell these newly seeded fields from a second-year field of medium red clover. You have to walk into the field to discover the small grain stubble, entirely covered by a growth of 12 to 18 inches of clover. In such seasons it is not uncommon to harvest a seed crop in the fall from medium red clover seeded the previous April.

Medium red clover will make a large yield of hay in the early part of the second year. Then, unlike true mammoth clover, another crop comes on. This may be cut for hay. Or it may be harvested for seed.

Apparently many Iowa farmers have purchased clover seed as "mammoth clover" and with a favorable season have had a heavy growth in the seeding year. But when such growth is obtained in the seeding year, a farmer can be almost certain that he has medium red clover and not mammoth clover.

